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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 003055

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS TO LABOR COLLECTIVE
DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CCA AND EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2014

TAGS: PHUM CU IT ILO HUMAN RIGHTS

SUBJECT: ITALIAN LABOR UNIONS HAVE CONDEMNED HUMAN AND
LABOR RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CUBA

REF: STATE 153312

Classified By: POL MINCOUNS THOMAS COUNTRYMAN, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (U) Italy has three primary labor union confederations, the General Confederation of Italian Labor (CGIL), the Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions (CISL), and the Italian Union of Labor (UIL). All three are more or less left-leaning, with CISL (with roots in Catholic social doctrine) the most moderate and UIL the most pragmatic.

¶2. (C) All three federations are strong advocates of international labor rights. In fact, both CISL and CGIL wrote to Fidel Castro to protest the lack of respect for human rights and repression of those seeking greater democracy through peaceful means. (We were surprised not to find a similar condemnation from UIL. They may have taken similar action, but not posted the information to the federation's website.) From that standpoint, we think Italian labor federations might be willing take a more consistent public stand, although the Cuban situation has not thus far been a priority here.

¶3. (C) The confederations would not necessarily be eager to have their activities identified closely with the United States and would not want to be seen as "U.S. pawns" in such a venture -- to put it frankly, particularly under the current Administration. That said, Embassy maintains good contacts with all three groups, and all three regularly repeat assurances that they are not anti-American and want to maintain ties. It could be worth discussing with them the need for highlighting the situation in Cuba more forcefully and more regularly, reviewing facts such as those included in Ref, and encouraging them to speak out frequently on the situation and demand reform. Embassy could convey such a message if so instructed. Other effective interlocutors for Italian unions would be American labor leaders or academicians and others not associated too closely with the Administration or conservative entities.

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NOTE: NOT PASSED TO ABOVE ADDRESSEE(S)

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